

**From:** Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education

**To:** Richard Long, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

**Subject:** Proposal to change age range of Stone Bay (Foundation) Special School from 5-19 years to 4-19 years and increase the designated number from 80 to 90.

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** None

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:** Broadstairs – Rosalind Binks

**Summary:**

This report informs members of the proposal to change the age-range of Stone Bay (Foundation) Special School from 5-19 years to 4-19 years and increase the designated number to from 80 to 90

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to:

- (i) agree to change the age range of Stone Bay (Foundation) Special School from 5-19 years to 4-19 years in order to provide reception places to help with the demand for specialist places for pupils from reception age.
- (ii) agree to increase the designated number from 80 to 90.
- (iii) issue a public notice to permanently change the age range of the school and increase the designated number from 80 to 90 and subject to no objections being received to the public notice, proceed with the proposal.

**1. Introduction**

1.1. Kent County Council (KCC) as the Local Authority has a duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The County Council's commissioning plan for Education Provision in Kent 2020-2024 is a five year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out our future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent including SEND provisions. A copy of the plan can be viewed from this link:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/education-provision/education-provision-plan>

1.2. KCC does not have enough local specialist provision and too many children and young people have to go to a Special School far from home to have their education, health and care needs met.

- 1.3. KCC have published a Strategy to improve the outcomes for Kent's children and young people with SEN and those who are disabled (SEND) as our current special school capacity has not kept pace with changing needs and we are spending too much on transporting children to schools far away from their local communities.
- 1.4. As at January 2019, 3.4% of the pupils (5-19) in Schools located in Kent were subject to an EHCP. This compares to 3.1% nationally.
- 1.5. The number of pupils in Thanet District with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) (full SEN cohort 0-25 years) in Spring 2019 was 1369 (3.2%), an increase of 12.8% from 2018. The percentage of the school age population (5-19 years old) with an EHCP in Thanet is 4.8%.
- 1.6. Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) remains the most common primary need in Kent. 40% of children and young people aged 0-25 years who have an EHCP have ASD identified as their primary need. This is significantly higher than the National figure which stands at 29%.
- 1.7. The overall increase in the Kent school population has inevitably led to an increase in the number of pupils subject to EHCPs. In addition to this there has been an increase in the number of children starting education in reception who have already had a diagnosis of ASD. It is anticipated that the demand for specialist places will continue to increase with the overall population growth, although Kent is exploring a range of approaches that will support more pupils in mainstream settings. Specialist resource Provisions run by schools are part of this continuum of support.

## **2. Proposal**

- 2.1. It is proposed to lower the age range of Stone Bay School from 5-19 to 4-19 and at the same time, increase the designated number from 80 to 90. Stone Bay school specialises in providing both day and residential education for pupils aged 5 to 19 years who have a diagnosed autistic spectrum disorder, (ASD) along with severe and complex learning needs. All pupils have an Education, Health & Care plan. The school currently provides for children from Year 1. It is proposed to lower the age range to include 4-year-old children to include a reception class from September 2020. This will benefit pupils enabling them to start their education in an ASD specific provision. The school has been seeing this demand coming through since it opened its Key Stage 1 provision but has not been able to admit 4-year-old pupils as its designation does not allow it to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Extending the age range to enable them to admit 4-year-old pupils would allow the school to encourage and embed communication at a younger age, providing a positive learning experience for the children in an Early Years Foundation Stage appropriate environment. Currently pupils start their education in other schools or remain in nursery settings and transfer to Stone Bay at 5 years. By removing the stresses of this transition and fully immersing the children in an ASD supportive environment at the start of their formal education, the school expect to see improved communication and learning and reduce challenging behaviours.
- 2.2. To facilitate the establishment of a reception class, the school is proposing to refurbish and reconfigure current classrooms to accommodate a reception

class with a care suite and toilets and create an outdoor learning and play area. Staff with appropriate qualifications for the Early Years Foundation Stage will be recruited.

### **3. Alternative Proposals**

- 3.1. Foreland Fields, St Anthony's and Laleham Gap Special Schools in Thanet do not provide for the needs of pupils with the complexity of need catered for by Stone Bay School.

### **4. Financial Implications**

#### 4.1. Capital

The School is proposing to refurbish and reconfigure current classrooms to accommodate a reception class with a care suite and toilets and create an outdoor learning and play area this has been costed at £75,000.

#### 4.2. Revenue Costs

As per KCC policy a total of £6,000 per newly provided classroom will be provided to the school from the DGS revenue budget.

#### 4.3. Human

KCC will work closely with the senior leadership teams of the school to ensure that all appropriate accommodation and facilities are provided to enable them to deliver an effective curriculum.

### **5. Equalities implications**

An EqIA has been completed and identified no negative impacts and the following positive impacts:

Reception aged children with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), profound, severe and complex needs and additional comorbidities needs in the Thanet district will be able to attend provision local to their homes.

There will be an increase in the total number of places available for children with Complex Needs and ASD.

### **6. Vision and Priority for Improvement**

This proposal will help to secure our ambition "to ensure that Kent's young people have access to the education, work and skills opportunities necessary to support Kent business to grow and be increasingly competitive in the national and international economy" as set out in 'Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement (2015-2020)'.

### **7. Consultation**

- 7.1. An education consultation was held from 3 March 2020 to 31 March 2020.

- 7.2. The consultation document was distributed to parents/carers, school staff and governors, schools in the Thanet District, County Councillors, Local MP, Diocesan Authorities, Thanet District Council and other interested parties. The consultation document was posted on the School's website and on KCC's website and the link to the website was widely circulated.

<https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/Stonebay/consultationHome>

- 7.3. A total of 15 written responses were received by The Governing Body of Stone Bay during the consultation period. All were supportive of the proposal and a summary and analysis of the responses is provided in appendix 1

## **8. Views**

### **8.1. The Local Member**

The Local Member recognises changing schools at any age is for most, quite a daunting experience. If the School has capacity for this, I am very much in favour of extending the age range to provide a Reception year for younger children.

### **8.2. The views of the Headteacher and Governing Body:**

The Governing Body and Headteacher of the school are fully supportive of the proposal and believe that the benefit to pupils of starting their education in an ASD specific provision would be considerable. This would allow the school to teach and embed communication at a younger age, providing a positive learning experience for the children in an Early Years Foundation Stage appropriate environment.

### **8.3. Area Education Officer**

The Area Education Officer for East Kent fully supports this proposal as it is in response to the identified need in the local area.

## **9. Conclusions**

The proposal to change the age range of Stone Bay Special School from 5-19 to 4-19 years and to increase the designated number from 80 to 90 will help to address the identified need and meet current pressures for reception places for ASD in Thanet. It is in line with and supports our vision to ensure that children and young people in Kent get the best start in life as set out in KCC's Strategic Statement 2015-20 'Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes' and the 'Commissioning Plan for Education – Kent' (2020 – 2024).

## **10. Recommendations**

### **Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to:

- (i) agree to change the age range of Stone Bay (Foundation) Special School from 5-19 years to 4-19 years in order to provide reception places to meet the demand for specialist places for pupils from reception age.
- (ii) agree to increase the designated number from 80 to 90.
- (iii) issue a public notice to permanently change the age range of the school and increase the designated number from 80 to 90 and, subject to no objections being received to the public notice, proceed with the proposal.

## **11. Background Documents (plus links to document)**

### **11.1. Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement 2015-2020**

[https://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/29786/Kent-County-Council-Strategic-Statement.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/29786/Kent-County-Council-Strategic-Statement.pdf)

### **11.2. Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision**

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/education-provision/education-provision-plan>

11.3. Equality Impact Assessment – Attached

11.4. DPIA Screening Assessment – Attached

**12. Contact Details**

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